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Local leftovers

School nurse Erica Martin starts program

See story on page 4

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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"I've been playing music at night and working during the day for so long, I don't know any other way." – *Lee Steel*

See story page 25

ON THE COVER

Erica Martin, the nurse at Ruth Chaffee School, was honored by the town's Human Services Department for her efforts to save food left over from the student lunches and donate it to the Newington Food Bank.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
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Nurse creates program

Ruth Chaffee School donates uneaten lunch to town food pantry

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Photos by Lisa Brisson

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WHO BUT W.B.MASON

Erica Martin, the school nurse at Ruth Chaffee School, collects leftover food from lunch period for the town's food bank.

A new initiative at Ruth Chaffee School is proving that sometimes the smallest actions can have the largest impact.

"It's pretty simple," School Nurse Erica Martin said. "It's almost like a no-brainer."

During each lunch wave in the cafeteria, students are now given the option to donate unopened food and whole fruit to the town's food bank. The idea came about when Martin was visiting an area high school and saw a cardboard bin sitting next to the trash can in the cafeteria for uneaten fruit.

"I immediately thought, 'why can't we do that?'" she said. "It's such a shame that sometimes the food that kids take, then goes untouched, and goes right into the garbage."

At the beginning of the school year, Martin approached Principal Beverly Lawrence with the idea and was met with great enthusiasm. Lawrence called it a "great opportunity to give back to our community. Although our donation may not alleviate the hunger in the world, it can hopefully alleviate hunger in our community."

With her principal's support, Martin then began talking with the cafeteria workers and custodians who would do the brunt of the initiative's work and found that they had already been thinking of similar ideas. Cafeteria employees Eva Greczkowski and Cheryl Baehr, along with custodian Dave Carman, embraced the idea wholeheartedly.

"It definitely was the brainchild of mostly the people who work in the cafeteria," Martin said.

With each of the important pieces in the school lined up, she reached out to Carol Labrecque, human services coordinator, to see if her department would accept the donations.

"She was so excited," Martin said. "She said she'd been thinking about doing it for a while."

After reaching out to the town, Martin then had to contact the health district to verify that the program would be able to function because of the transfer of perishable food from one venue to another. All of the food that is donated comes from students who purchase hot lunch, which Martin said often results in a great deal of waste.

Due to a federal law that started with the 2012-13 academic year, all students who purchase their lunch are required to take a serving of a fruit or vegetable, whether the food is consumed or not. The garbage cans in the Ruth Chaffee cafeteria were often filled with whole fruits, cartons of milk and wrapped cheese sticks that were not wanted by students.

Starting in October, a cardboard box was set up in the cafeteria near the trash cans for students to place their uneaten whole fruits and unopened packaged snacks. As soon as the initiative started, it was embraced by students throughout the school.

"The kids really want to help," Martin said. "A lot of them understand where their food is going and

"Our students felt it important to give to others instead of wasting."

– Beverly Lawrence

they want to be a part of that."

The program has also served as a life lesson for those who didn't previously know about the food bank.

"It is also very important for our students to understand the meaning of giving back," Lawrence said. "Our students felt it important to give to others instead of wasting."

Martin said that after each lunch wave, Carman, Greczkowski or Baehr take the donated food and place it in a refrigerator that is owned by the after-school program. Those who run this program made space for the initiative when they learned about it.

At the end of each week, a volunteer from the food bank comes to the school to collect the donations, which Martin said is typically almost a full box's worth.

"There's typically a lot of milk, yogurt and apples," she said.

Once the initial setup was complete, the program became entirely self-regulated.

"It's very easy to do," she said. "It doesn't take extra time or money on our part, but it does so much good."

Martin added that she hopes that other schools in the district will be inspired by what Ruth Chaffee has done and start to donate their uneaten food as well. She and the school were honored at a recent awards night sponsored by the town Department of Human Services.

"I think we all would love to see the other elementary schools, and even the upper schools, do this," she said.

"The best part of it is that this food that would otherwise get thrown away is getting passed on for other people to get nutrients and better their health in a way they might not have been able to before." **NL**

Some of the items that are donated weekly to the town's food bank include yogurt, cheese sticks, apples, oranges, carrot sticks and milk.

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Police Chief Stephen Clark presides over the first meeting of his new Police Community Council.

Photo by Mark Jahne

Seeking public input

Police chief establishes new advisory group of citizens

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Police Chief Stephen Clark is a firm believer that the best police departments are those that forge strong relationships with the communities they serve. That makes input and feedback from the public vital.

It's why he decided to create a new Police Community Council. He is the only police official in the group. The other members are people who live and work in town and want to help him forge that connection.

It's not like there is nothing in place at present. The Newington Police Department has a full-time community service officer as well as a school resource officer in the high school. There is also the annual Citizens Police Academy.

An estimated 300 people have signed up to attend that academy over the past 15 years. Based upon that success, the department will hold a Youth Academy for children ages 14-17 this summer. A maximum of 18 participants will be accepted.

"That says a lot about how the community feels," Clark said.

Other department do not enjoy such a high participation rate in their public outreach and some don't even bother to try. The citizens academy is a time-consuming program, but he believes it is well worth the effort.

The Newington Police department's overall approach to each day's work is to follow the guiding ideas of community policing in which the public is viewed as a participant, rather than a suspect group.

Nine volunteers attended the first PCC meeting the evening of April 21 at police headquarters in town hall. Clark told them that over time they will

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become more knowledgeable about police operations than anyone else in town, outside of the department.

"I want to use this council to get information out there [to the townspeople] and information back," Clark told his volunteers. "We don't want to operate in a vacuum."

He is pleased that the group represents different ages and backgrounds. There is representation from both men and women. All have some history of prior community involvement.

"This is uncharted territory. I don't know of any other police department that's doing this," he said.

He could have assigned this group to one of his command staff but Clark wanted to chair it himself. He wants unfiltered feedback from residents and the business community.

One of the first things the group will tackle is getting a better understanding of the annual racial profiling report that was just made public. It tends to show NPD in a negative light but Clark said the way the data is collected and analyzed is unfair and incomplete.

He told the group that the department has a policy of stopping cars for equipment violations, such as a broken tail light. That fits the legal requirements for initiating a stop and can sometimes lead to the discovery of drugs, wanted felons and other serious offenses.

"This is uncharted territory. I don't know of any other police department that's doing this."
– Police Chief Stephen Clark

The chief gave the PCC a full breakdown of the department's sworn personnel and support staff. He wants to add a sergeant to the night shift because the increased level of activity merits having another supervisor on the road.

He also spoke about the $7 million portion of the town budget that funds the police department. The vast majority of that money – 93 percent – covers salaries and overtime. He is required to follow minimum staffing numbers that are unchanged since 1994.

The operating budget allows for the replacement of three patrol cruisers each year; it used to be five. The new models will have ballistic panels in the doors to afford officers greater protection.

"These cars are running 24/7," he said.

Newington is selective in who it hires to wear a law enforcement uniform. Clark insists that his offers have not only solid education and training, but also good interpersonal skills. He only wants the best candidates.

"Our reputation is good and our salary and benefits are above average," he said.

Clark said the department will soon begin using in-car cameras to record traffic stops. It is a tool that protects officers from false accusations and the public from improper policing.

"The state is pushing body cameras and police transparency in light of what happened in Ferguson," he said.

Riots broke out in Ferguson, Missouri, this past year after an altercation between an officer and a young black male ended in the latter's death.

Clark is not planning to go down that path just yet, in large part because of the time-consuming and costly challenge of downloading and storing all of that video day after day.

The use by police of military hand-me-down armored vehicles is a controversial topic around the country. He supports the use of smaller models to provide officers more protection at potentially dangerous crime scenes.

In addition, officers are being trained in crisis intervention techniques by town human services staff.

Peter Gagnon enjoyed the first meeting and looks forward to learning more about, and assisting, local police. He and his father operate a business in town.

"I originally took the Citizens Police Academy. We just recently bought a house in Newington," Gagnon said. "I'm also pursuing a law enforcement career myself."

Longtime resident Gloria Olesen, who has volunteered for multiple causes over the years, said she joined the PCC because of her commitment to community involvement. She was further motivated by what she considers too much nastiness directed at the police on Facebook.

"I'm doing it because I'm a concerned citizen," Robin Aldieri said.

She is representing both herself and Our Savior's Lutheran Church. **NL**

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COMMUNITY PUBLICATIONS

Kelly Daniels and her fellow school bus drivers were honored for collecting food for the town food pantry. She is flanked by Superintendent of Schools William Collins, left, and Alan Avery, director of transportation.

Showing appreciation

Town Human Services Department holds volunteer recognition dinner

by Mark Jahne
Editor

The dozens of people who volunteer their time and energy to assist the town Human Services Department were honored for their service at a special dinner the evening of April 21 at the Newington Senior & Disabled Center.

Human Services Director Karen Futoma and her staff spoke of how much they depend upon these volunteers for help in areas not otherwise covered by the town budget. They perform numerous tasks, including stacking shelves and operating the town's food pantry, maintaining the clothing closet and running the holiday gift program, among others.

They also interact with the department's clients in various ways.

The department presented Volunteer of the Year Awards to Kelly Daniels and her fellow Newington Public Schools bus drivers and Erica Martin, the nurse at Ruth Chaffee School. In memoriam presentations were made to the families of volunteers Anne Bruno and Lucille Ingari, who both died this past year.

Daniels and her colleagues conducted a food drive that filled two buses. Martin came up with a method to reclaim unopened school cafeteria food and fresh fruit and donate it to the food bank.

Several town officials were in attendance, among them Mayor Roy Zartarian.

"Newington residents are known for stepping up. Tonight is an example of that," he said. [Your volunteerism] not only helps your fellow Newington residents, it helps the town."

"Volunteerism is about relationships. You are an inspiration to all of us," Interim Town Manager Tanya Lane said.

She praised the human services volunteers for helping to put people at ease and enabling them to maintain their dignity while asking the town for assistance.

"We absolutely could not do what we do ... if we didn't have all of your support," Human Services Director Karen Futoma said.

"This year has been an opportunity to have collaborations with the school department," Carol Labrecque, human services coordinator, said.

She noted that both award winners are employees of the Newington Public Schools. NL

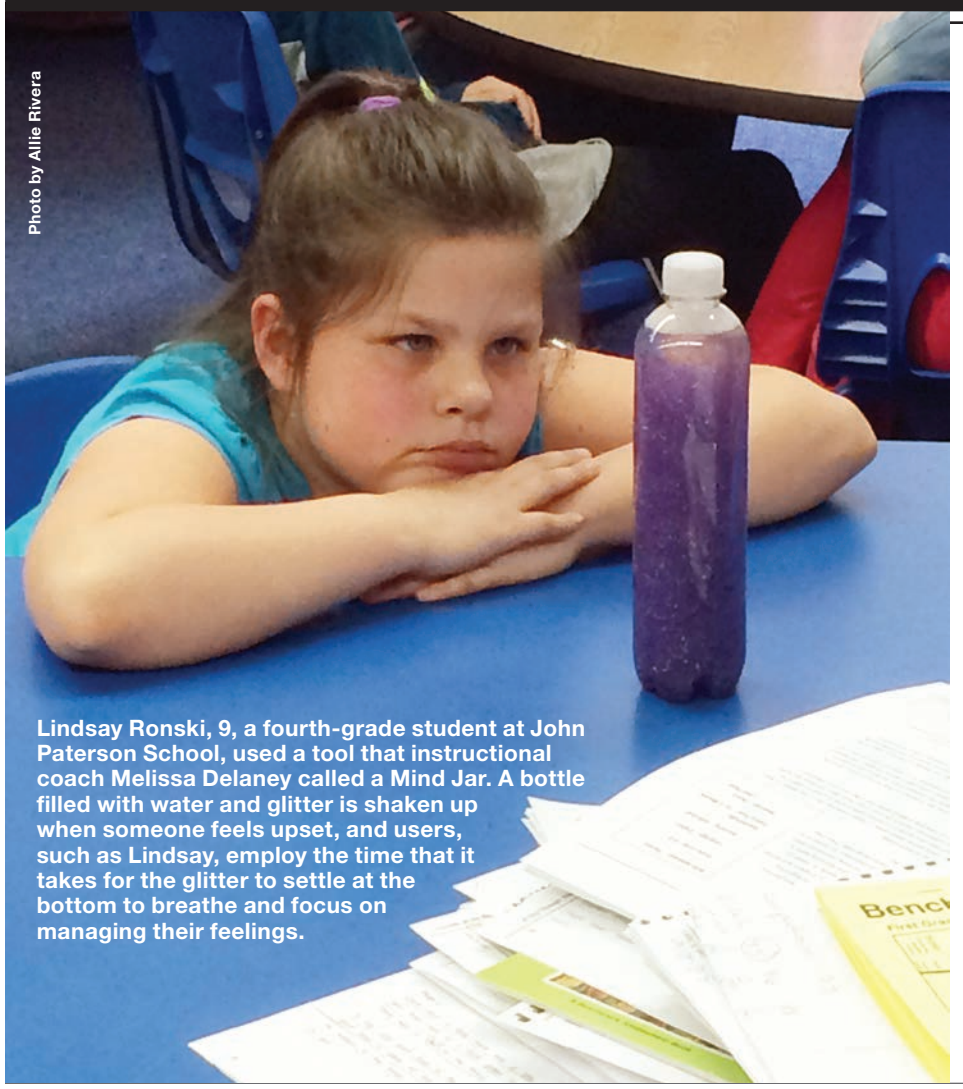

Photo by Allie Rivera

Lindsay Ronski, 9, a fourth-grade student at John Paterson School, used a tool that instructional coach Melissa Delaney called a Mind Jar. A bottle filled with water and glitter is shaken up when someone feels upset, and users, such as Lindsay, employ the time that it takes for the glitter to settle at the bottom to breathe and focus on managing their feelings.

LIFE *in the classroom*

Taking a mindful approach to education

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

As the school year starts to wind down, stress levels among teachers and students can often start to rise. With final examinations, statewide testing and other pressures as the end of the school year, some teachers in town are finding it best to take time to slow down.

"We are in a world of constant stimulation," Melissa Delaney, an instructional coach at John Paterson School, said. "To be able to take that deep breath and take a minute to center yourself, being able to focus on right now, that's so beneficial."

Delaney is one of the people spearheading the promotion of mindfulness in the classroom through guided activities, deep breathing and even some basic yoga poses for both students and

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Photo by Allie Rivera

Students in Melissa Delaney's School Family class participated in a mindfulness exercise to help learn about managing their emotions. The activity is part of a voluntary initiative for greater social-emotional learning in the classroom.

teachers.

Mindfulness is part of an overall swing towards greater social-emotional learning in schools, a trend which goes back decades.

"We have been practicing social-emotional learning forever," Director of Human Capitol Development Linda Darcy said.

"You look at the way public education always swings politically from left to right. In the '60s and '70s, it was all about social-emotional learning. Then when test scores went down, the focus on academics cut down on that social-emotional piece."

In its most basic terms, social-emotional learning is the process through which children and adults learn the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage their emotions. A large part of this comes from the idea of mindfulness, a two-fold approach to thinking that teaches people how to manage their emotions in stressful situations as well as care for their own well-being.

"We teach kids so often how to deal with their feelings and emotions in an outward way and this is all about taking care of yourself from the inside out," Rachel West-Balling said. "By including this program, it balances everything out."

She is the social worker at Ruth Chaffee and Anna Reynolds schools.

The recent push for mindfulness in local classrooms has been years in the making. West-Balling, who has been a social worker in the district for eight years, said that in her first few years she created a goal for herself to incorporate more mindfulness into her work with students.

"I had a supervisor who was very into mindfulness," she said. "Whenever we had a meeting it started with some meditation. She happened to be part of a committee in Connecticut, the first of its kind, really just getting research off the ground."

West-Balling began running mindfulness exercises in one of her fourth grade classrooms a few times throughout the year, and although she said she had a lot of support from outside resources, little about this initiative was known throughout the schools.

"There were a lot of people kind of giving me strange looks, like what is this?" she said with a laugh.

That began to change when others like Darcy and Delaney began to show interest in mindfulness.

"When Linda Darcy came into the schools, she brought in Yoga 4 Classrooms," West-Balling said.

Yoga 4 Classrooms is an educational tool that provides schools with an activity card deck. Each of the 67 colorful cards offers a new tool, such as a breathing exercise, yoga pose or other mindful activity, for students or teachers to use when they need to take a "brain break," as Delaney called it.

"The way that it is set up is set to have kids think about self-regulation and that social-emotional piece," Delaney explained. "It's less about the actual yoga."

For students who have been able to utilize these cards, it has offered new ways to control themselves

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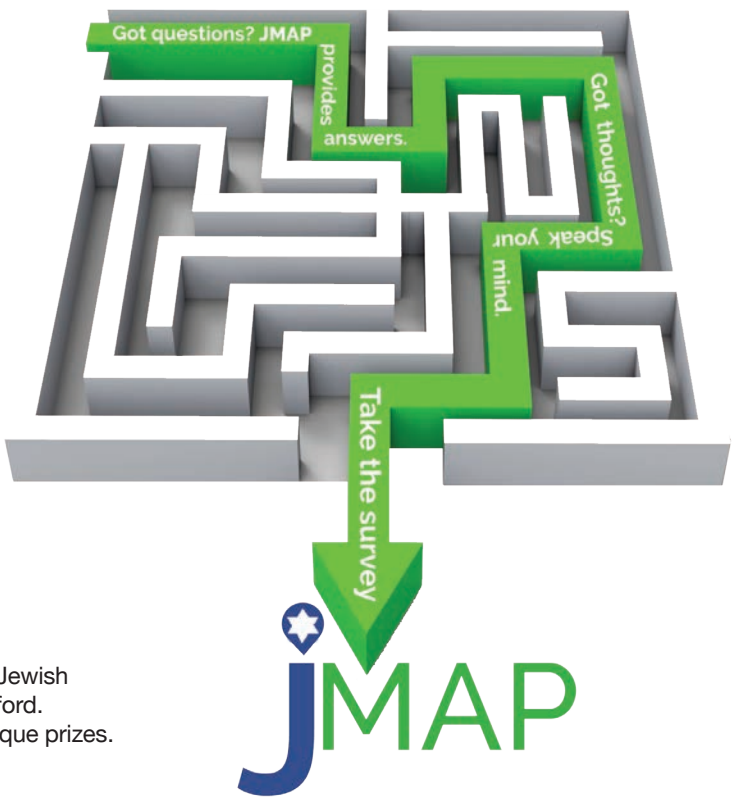

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when they find they themselves upset, stressed or tired.

"My favorite pose is the Power Breath," 8-year-old Isabella Pitkin said. "Sometimes when I didn't sleep so good and the next morning I'm tired, I can use the Power Breath to get a little more energy. Or sometimes when I'm a little stressed out I can use the Power Breath to clear my mind."

"It makes it easier to calm down when you're stressed and upset," 8-year-old Alexa Neil added.

According to Delaney, one of the goals of promoting mindfulness is to teach students at a young age how to properly handle stress.

"We're helping kids find a positive way to self-regulate so they can respond to a situation rather than react," she said.

Bringing the Yoga 4 Classrooms program into the schools on a voluntary basis was an easy decision for Darcy.

"I'm a research geek," she said. "If you look at the research, adolescent depression and adolescent suicide are skyrocketing. This mindfulness piece is really helping kids learn these skills that right now are fun, but will be incredibly valuable as they get older."

Although promoting mindfulness in schools is encouraged, Darcy stressed that both teacher and student participation is entirely voluntary. Teachers were given the opportunity to learn more at multiple professional development workshops.

Attendance was not mandatory, but both Darcy and West-Balling said they found positive responses.

"We've offered the opportunity for teachers to learn what mindfulness is and how mindfulness impacts student learning," Darcy said. "About half of the 400 teachers have grabbed the opportunity."

"After we have our professional development, we do survey the teachers and the response has been tremendously positive," West-Balling said. "More often than not, teachers are saying they will go back to their classroom and use this."

West-Balling added that she thinks part of the program's appeal is its simplicity.

"It's such a simple program. It's just a deck of cards," she said. "It's not some big kit with CDs and videos and lesson plans. It's a deck of cards with instructions on them."

The overall goal of Yoga 4 Classrooms and the mindfulness initiative in general are something that those involved say is most important.

"A lot of times things like social-emotional learning are seen as fluff, they're seen as a luxury," Darcy said. "When people throw around words like 'return on investment' or 'cost-benefit analysis,' first of all, they're not looking at the actual research."

According to Darcy, for every dollar put into social-emotional learning at the elementary level, there is a $7 return on investment.

"For whatever we put into it, we get so much more out of it," she said. **NL**

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Two Girl Scouts earn Gold Award

Kara Boninsegna and Markella DeConti of Girl Scout Troop 10520 recently earned the Gold Award, the highest achievement in scouting. It recognizes young women who demonstrate a commitment to making a difference in the lives of others. Less than 6 percent of all eligible Girl Scouts earn this award yearly.

Kara and Markella have each been involved in scouting for more than 10 years. They were honored by the Newington Girl Scout Award Recognition Committee at its annual ceremony at town hall. Their girls received an official citation from the Connecticut General Assembly presented by state Sen. Paul Doyle and state Rep. Gary Byron.

Other Scouts received their Silver and Bronze awards that evening. Troop leaders Joanne Cocola and Maria DeConti, both of Newington, provided support and guidance to the Gold Award winners.

This prestigious award is given to scouts who create and execute an intensive project that addresses a community need. A Scout must use her organizational, leadership, project management and teamwork skills to complete a project that will have a sustainable impact in the communities and improve lives.

The Gold Award requires a minimum of 80 hours of work and takes a year or longer to plan and implement.

Kara is a junior at Berlin High School. For her project, she sought to inform and assist elderly people who have lost the primary cook in their household. She created a cookbook entitled "Easy Meals for the Elderly" as well as taught several cooking classes at the Newington Senior & Disabled Center.

The participants made recipes from her cookbook and listened to Kara present information to them regarding dehydration and food safety. Copies of her cookbook are available at the center.

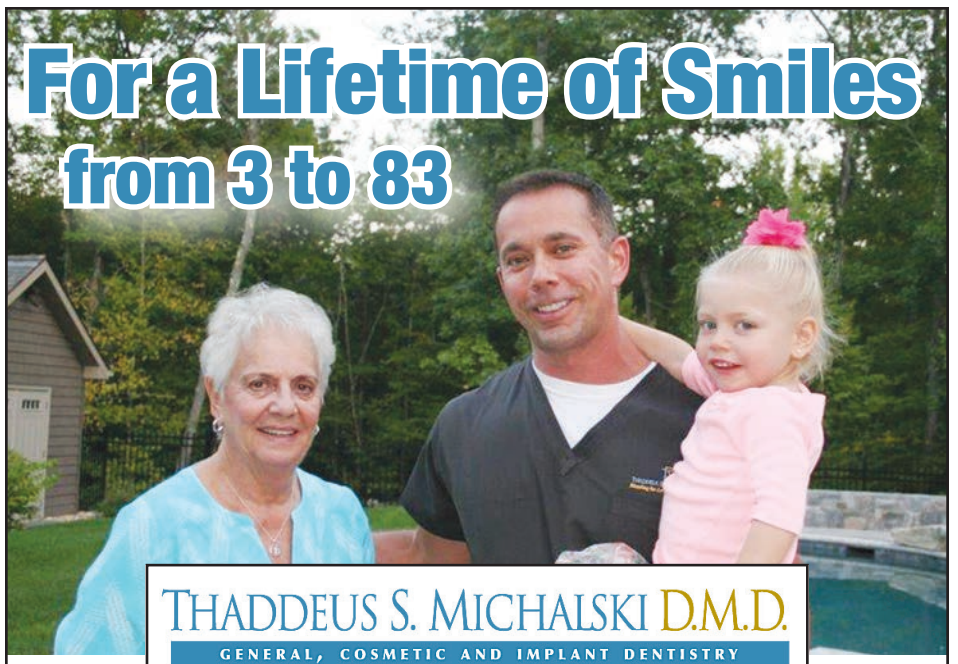
Markella is a senior at Newington High School who plans to attend Quinnipiac University in the fall. Her project informed young children about dental hygiene. She created and illustrated a children's book called "The Molars" that helped teach them how to properly brush their teeth and have healthy smiles.

She presented this book to classes at John Paterson School, where not only did she read the book to the students, but she also had a local dental hygienist speak to them in order to help them better understand the importance of good dental hygiene.

Kara Boninsegna, second from left, and Markella DeConti, second from right, recently earned their Gold Awards, the highest achievement in Girl Scouts. They are flanked by their mothers, Julie Boninsegna and Maria DeConti.

Her intent is to start healthy habits at a young age. Her book can be found at the Lucy Robbins Wells Library.

Girl Scouts is celebrating the Gold Award Centennial this year. Since 1916, this award has represented excellence and leadership and acknowledges each recipient's dedication to these lofty goals. **NL**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People notes

Sarah Ericson and Connor Buckley

Sarah Ericson and **Connor Buckley** were honored as the 2016 CIAC Scholar Athletes from Newington High School.

Ray Neistat, a record-setting athlete at Newington High School, will continue his diving career at Dartmouth College this fall.

Kingswood Oxford School senior

Ray Neistat

Matt Goldman announced his plans to play baseball at Salve Regina University.

Mildred Gallegos, a resident of Middlewoods of Newington independent and assisted living community, was honored by the Connecticut Assisted Living Association with its Distinguished Resident Accomplishment Award.

Matt Goldman

Roselyn Terrazos-Moreno and **Taylor Green,** students at Newington High School, participated in Leadership Greater Hartford's Summer Nexus program. This is a week-long youth leadership program for students in grades 10-12 that fosters connections and community involvement through interactive workshops and service learning activities.

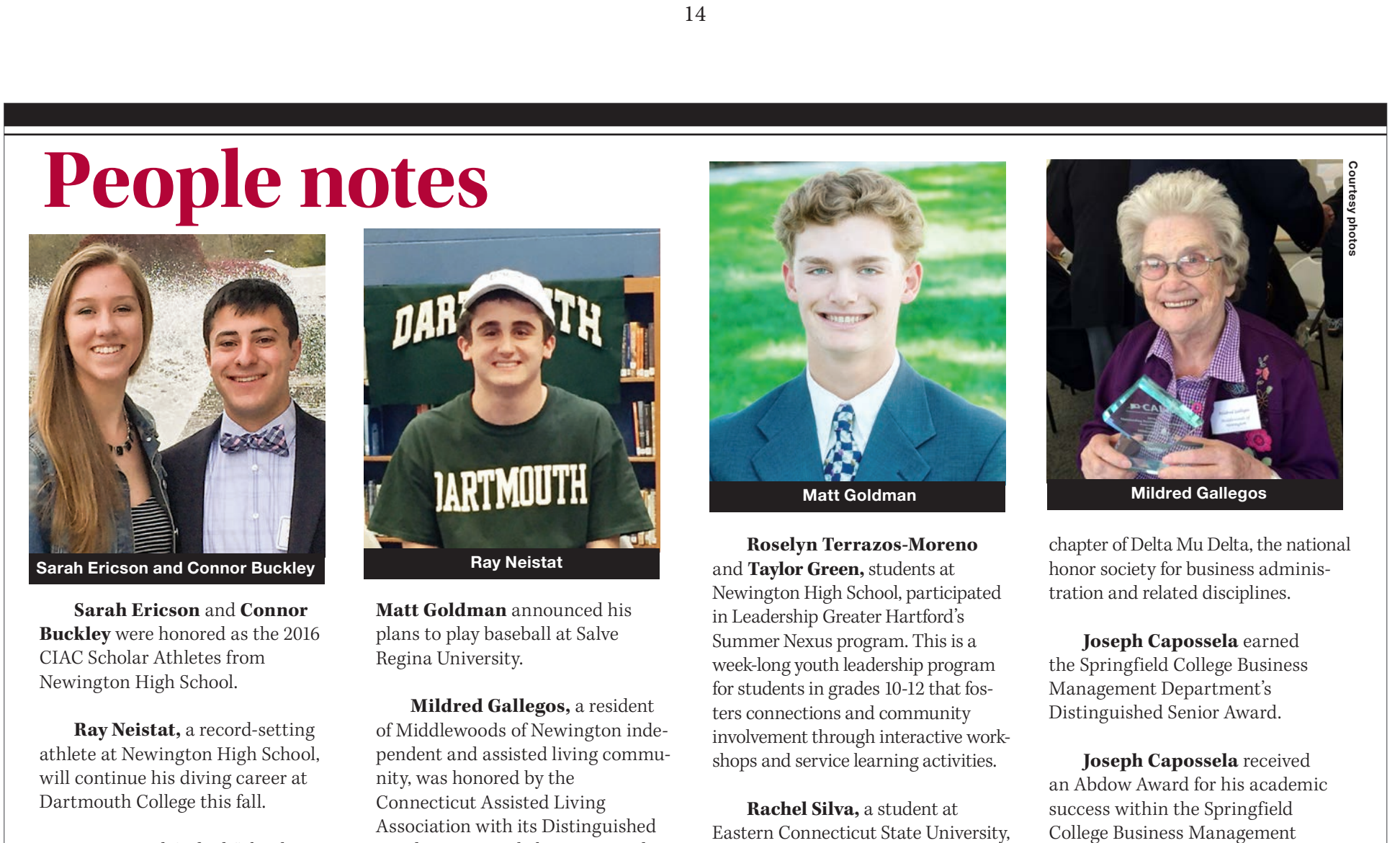
Rachel Silva, a student at Eastern Connecticut State University, was inducted into the Delta Omega chapter of Delta Mu Delta, the national honor society for business administration and related disciplines.

Mildred Gallegos

Courtesy photos

Joseph Capossela earned the Springfield College Business Management Department's Distinguished Senior Award.

Joseph Capossela received an Abdow Award for his academic success within the Springfield College Business Management Department. NL



Student of the month

John Wallace pupil displays a dedication to education

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Photo by Allie Rivera

At 13-years-old, Nikhil Patel already knows what is important to his life.

"My main thing is education," he said.

An eighth grade student at John Wallace Middle School, Nikhil loves all of his classes, but he is especially interested in the STEM quartet of science, technology, engineering and math.

"Right now, my favorite is science," he said. "We're talking about genetics, which is similar to what I want to do when I grow up, which is something in the medical field."

His science class recently conducted a series of forensic experiments that involved extracting DNA and using fingerprints to solve a fictional crime.

"It's been fun to do that and figure it out," he said.

Nikhil also enjoys his math class, where he is currently studying polynomials, which he said almost feels like solving a puzzle. Teachers who work with him every day said his commitment to learning is evident.

"Nikhil stands out to us as a dedicated student and leader in the classroom," eighth grade language arts teacher Christopher Klatt said. "He has an incredible work ethic and strives to get the most out of his experience at JWMS."

Seventh grade reading teacher Lauren Whitney recalled Nikhil as a standout student in her class last year.

"Nikhil is one of the hardest-working students I have ever had the pleasure of teaching," she said.

When not devoting himself to his studies, he enjoys spending time with his family, which includes his parents and younger sister, Meera, who is a fifth-grader at John Wallace.

"We're pretty close," Nikhil said. "During the weekends we go places to have fun, like Bowl-O-Rama or out to a restaurant. It's all fun."

He also is close with his extended family and said one of his favorite activities is going to his grandmother's house and playing Xbox with his cousins. He recently discovered another new hobby that he enjoys doing during his free time.

"I actually just got Netflix," he said with a small laugh. "Lately I like finding new shows and just binge watching them. Right now I'm watching 'Lost' and 'Merlin' and those are really good."

As the school year wraps up, he is getting excited about entering Newington High School in the fall.

"I'm going on their website to learn about all the clubs they have, like yearbook and some gaming system clubs," he said.

While looking at classes and activities, Nikhil is also thinking about life after high school.

"I want to do something with the body, like being a surgeon of some sort," he said. "My parents are afraid of blood and that kind of stuff and say they couldn't do it, but I could."

In addition to being recognized for his academics, Nikhil's teachers cite his positive attitude and kindness toward others as assets that truly set him apart from his peers.

"He came in every day with a smile on his face, a desire to learn and grow and a willingness to help others," Whitney said. "I could always rely on him to help out a fellow student or help me."

"In addition to his strong academic performance, he also exhibits care and concern for others. He is quick to volunteer to help others, both teachers and peers, and treats everyone with great kindness," Klatt said.

"Nikhil does not do this for the recognition, but because he knows that it is the right thing to do, and this serves as a great example for all of us."

For now, Nikhil is happy to continue with his studies and spending time with loved ones because that is what makes him the happiest.

"The most happy place that I have is at home with my family, but I'm also happy at school because my friends are so encouraging with the path I want to go through," he said. NL

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Summer Life

SPECIAL SECTION OF

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Getting your GOLF ON

Tips on making the most of the season

by Nancy Thompson and Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writers

There's nothing like the green of summer, unless it's the "greens" of summer on area golf courses.

Once considered to be a game for the elite, golf's appeal has expanded to youths, seniors and players who don't get out often.

Professionals at courses in the area are always looking to attract new golfers and to help their players enhance their skills and add to their enjoyment of the game.

In Glastonbury, Jim Tennant, the PGA professional at Minnechaug Golf Course, is working to encourage golfers of all ages and ability levels to enjoy the game at the nine-hole course. He understands what the course is and what it isn't, and has helped make the par-35 Minnechaug course a place where people who are learning to play, women and older golfers feel welcome and respected.

Dan Butler, director of golf at Tower Ridge Country Club in Simsbury, suggests golfers look over their equipment to ensure they have what is needed and update outdated equipment. "Technology is changing the game," Butler said.

Once out on the course, Butler suggested that golfers find a place where they feel comfortable. "Play the right set of tees," he said. "Don't go all the way back in the tee boxes."

As tempting as it is to head to the local course, Ryan Kane, manager at Rolling Greens Golf Club in Rocky Hill, suggested that every player, regardless of skill level, take some time at a driving range.

"You want to stay positive when playing golf," Kane said. "It's definitely better to shake the cobwebs off and practice a little bit."

New to the game?

Our experts encourage brand-new golfers to take lessons. "It could be a group lesson or a private lesson, but it doesn't have to be one-on-one," Tennant said. "New golfers need to learn enough fundamentals to enjoy themselves out there." He often suggests that beginners play later in the day, even at twilight, when the course is less crowded and they will be less stressed. "Don't come Saturday morning," he said.

Rich Crowe, golf pro at Rockledge Golf Club in West Hartford, agreed. "For somebody getting into the sport, taking lessons early on would be something I would encourage them to do," he said.

Butler agreed, suggesting that lessons from a professional would serve a new golfer well.

Golf equipment doesn't need to be a budget-buster.

"You don't have to spend an outrageous amount of money," Butler said. "I don't think anyone personally should spend full retail on golf equipment. It's outrageous, the cost. There are plenty of places who sell used or new equipment at a discounted price."

Kane suggested that once new golfers have a feel for how to hit the ball, they can try an executive course, a par-3 shorter course, before trying their luck at a longer 18-hole. "Play with your friends so you can get the proper etiquette and pace of play," he said.

John Tatakis III is the manager at Connecticut Golf Academy, which has a driving range and practice space for putting and chipping and

Making the most of your green fees

Green fees vary by course and often by day and time. Here are some suggestions from the professionals for getting the most for your money.

Look for deals. Some courses offer season passes. Discounts are often available on the course's website.

Show up a half-hour early so you can practice a few putts. That way you won't spend the first few holes getting used to the game.

If you're open to playing any time, play on off-peak days and hours.

The Golf Now app, which Minnechaug Golf Course and many others in the area use, may offer discounts such as a reduced fee for nine holes with a cart or two rounds for the price of one.

other elements of the short game. He suggested that new golfers start at a driving range and sign up for lessons to learn the fundamentals.

Weekend warrior?

Weekend golfers should plan ahead and book a tee time in advance so they're not disappointed when they arrive or are shut out of playing altogether. "Every course has a little different policy," Tennant said. "There's an app for Android and iPhone that lets people book tee times seven days in advance."

Kane also suggested booking tee times in advance. "If you are playing a course for the first time check out their website, look at the course layout so you know what you are up against, especially on a course where it is the first time you play," he said.

Crowe recommended finding time to practice parts of the game. This could be a half-hour at the Rockledge driving range or some time on its practice putting green or at West Hartford's 9-hole course, Buena Vista Golf Course.

"Buena Vista is a little more laid back," Crowe said. "A lot of beginners go out of there. It's a little bit shorter, easier to get around."

Practicing at home is an option as well, Butler said.

"You can find 10 to 15 minutes a day to hit some putts in the living room or swing in front of a mirror," he said. "You don't have to be playing golf to get better at playing golf."

Tatakis said a nine-hole or executive course would be good for golfers who won't have time to play as often as they'd like and also enable players to get a good handle on their game before they go on to an 18-hole course.

The regulars

Tennant said daily or almost-daily golfers tend to play the same course and know when the quiet times are. They also may have a relationship with the staff, which can be important. "The staff and the golfers get to really know each other," he said. "We will always bend over backward for that regular customer."

Keeping in shape is important.

Crowe often suggests that golfers work out in the winter, and focus on stretching, all of which will help when the season starts in the spring.

He said it's a good idea to come to the course about a half hour before their tee time to have a chance to do some stretching, hit a few balls on the driving range and practice putting before teeing off for good.

"If you are playing on a daily basis, it's all about having fun," Butler said. "It's only a game. No matter what happens on a golf course, the course is going to stay there and you are the one who played bad. Remember, it's only a game and you can always come back to it."

Kane said regular golfers can look around for a golf league because playing with a group often provides motivation.

Tatakis likes variety. "I would suggest people try different types of courses, different layouts rather than playing the same course over and over," he said.

Get 'em while they're young

Many young golfers are introduced to the sport through their parents or grandparents.

Crowe suggested letting young children hit balls on the driving range or watch golfers practice rather than starting lessons too soon.

"It needs to be fun for them," he said, adding that West Hartford offers a number of learning opportunities for youngsters to learn the sport, including summer programs.

Tatakis believes children who have expressed an interest in learning the sport would benefit from a group lesson. "That definitely helps their experience," he said.

Once a child has expressed interest in the sport, parents should invest in a set of junior clubs, a better option then cutting down a set of clubs that once belonged to an adult. "It's going to be easier for the child to strike the ball and get the ball in the air," Crowe said.

Butler has seen children as young as 3 get started in the game, but warned that parents should not press their children to take up the sport.

If children take a serious interest in the game, then parents can consider purchasing a junior set of clubs. "Kids having their own set of clubs, that is the right fit, is only going to benefit them," he said.

"My father put a golf club in my hand, I think I was 3 years old," Kane said, adding that it is not uncommon to start children in the sport at such a young age.

The younger they are, Kane said, the better opportunity they will have to develop their own natural swing.

"You can play golf your entire life, at every level, at every age," he said.

Tennant said young golfers also like to know when the quiet times are.

"If they don't, they might want to check with the staff to find out when the best time for them to play would be," he said, adding that, while public courses are less expensive than private facilities, that doesn't mean they're easier.

"It's best to ask," he said, adding that Minnechaug is considered to be user-friendly. "Some can be really intimidating." NL

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Summer LIFE

Finding Summer's treasures

Courtesy photo

The Desmarais family of Glastonbury is a frequent visitor to Pick Your Own farms. Here Josephine, then 2 ½, and Allison, then 4, enjoy picking apples. The girls are now 10 and 11.

The crops are ready at The Pickin' Patch in Avon. Christopher Carville, owner/farm manager, says that strawberries and pumpkins are the most popular to pick.

by Mara Dresner and Allie Rivera
Staff Writers

With the temperatures rising and the days feeling brighter, outdoor family-friendly activities quickly become a preferable option. Throughout the region are a wide variety of activities that will get families off the couch, out the door and enjoying nature in a fun, safe and collaborative way.

While there's no shortage of farm stands in the area, many families may enjoy the experience of heading to the fields themselves to pick their own fruits and berries.

"Pick your own is a big attraction, and we are the only PYO farm in this area. People walk into our store and want to know, 'What can we pick ourselves?' People want fresh produce and the only way to know if something is truly fresh is to pick it yourself," said Christopher Carville, owner/farm manager of The Pickin' Patch in Avon, which is in its 350th year of farming.

"Fresh produce appeals to everyone and it's fairly easy to do. Parents come with young children so they can teach them where food comes from. Businesspeople on their way home from work stop in to pick up a few things for dinner. We also have hard-core pickers who come and spend hours picking so they can freeze it for use all year long. [People] like knowing exactly where their food came from and when it was picked. We also have a beautiful location, so people enjoy spending time on our farm."

The Desmarais family of Glastonbury is avid pickers and enjoys trying different farms in the area.

"We prefer our fruits to be fresh and local, and Glastonbury has a lot to offer. We do purchase from the farm stands, but we try to make time most weeks to skip the stand and head to the fields. We consider it a family activity. [There are] no electronic distractions, so we talk and joke as a family while picking. We often make it more fun by having contests, like who can pick the most blueberries or whose strawberry is the biggest," said Dennis Desmarais, who picks with his wife, Lisa, and their daughters, Allison and Josephine. "I think it is important for kids to have an appreciation for where food comes from, and the hard work that farmers and pickers have to do to put food on our plates."

Sandi Rose, member/manager of Rose's Berry Farm LLC in South Glastonbury, said she's noticed some customer favorites.

"Number one would be strawberries, since they are the first fruits available after a long winter; number two, blueberries; followed

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by number three, pumpkins/apples. Fall items have surged in popularity over the last 10 years because most do it as an outing with a group for a fun day in the country," she said.

Carville agreed that strawberries and pumpkins are big draws.

"Strawberries, obviously, because they are delicious and pumpkins because we offer free hayrides to the pumpkin fields for picking in October," said Carville, who suggests not wearing your Sunday best for the activity. "It involves dirt and usually some sweat, so dress appropriately."

Of course, the rewards of PYO are worth a little dirt.

"You can pick the freshest fruit or vegetables plus enjoy being in the country. Another reason is they get to know their farmer and trust them with using safe practices. Also, being able to enjoy the farm atmosphere and nature at its best is always a draw," Rose said. "We as farmers forget that most people don't enjoy the view we do and they enjoy coming just to enjoy being at the farm." For families that want time together outdoors for further bonding, but don't necessarily want a kitchen full of fruit, geocaching and earthcaching are also options to enjoy in the area or around the world.

Geocaching

Geocaching, also known as the world's largest treasure hunt, is all about adventure. A cache is the term used for some kind of treasure, typically a small box with trinkets inside. With geocaching, a cache is placed at a distinct coordinate, and participants can go online to find its location and search for the cache. Once it's found, participants can sign the logbook inside and swap out the trinkets to leave for the next person. The value of the find is not the key to geocaching, it's the adventure.

Similarly, earthcaching provides participants with an explicit location, but the treasure that is found at the end of this journey is of a natural state. Following the location coordinates while earthcaching brings those involved to a geological wonder.

There are numerous earthcaching locations in Connecticut, some of which are located in the Farmington Valley and surrounding area, with one in Talcott Mountain State Park and another in the Old Newgate Mine in East Granby. Further south, Rocky Hill's Dinosaur State Park also offers earthcaching adventures.

More information about earthcaching can be found through the state's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection website, while coordinates for geocaching can be found at www.geocaching.com.

For those who want adventures in a slightly more controlled environment, Dinosaur State Park offers its own version of looking for treasure.

"During the summer we have an outdoor mining activity," Park Manager Meg Enkler said. "Visitors buy a bag of what we call mining rough, so it has fossils, gems or sometimes both."

Participants put this roughage into a trough with water and sift through to find the various trinkets.

"We have little ID kits that were put together by a geologist so they can learn the fossils and gems," Enkler said.

Whatever activity a family chooses, summer is the time to get moving. **NL**

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Backyard FARMING

Tips for turning a home into a homestead

by Lynn Woike
LIFE Staff

As more people take an interest in where their food is produced and by whom, and as the do-it-yourself trend continues, homeowners are beginning to realize it doesn't get any more local than their own backyards and that the farm-to-chef table concept can involve your own kitchen.

Most homes have space for a garden and a compost bin. Fruit trees and bushes can be planted in place of ornamental varieties. There might even be room for a couple of chickens and even a goat.

"I think there's a lot of things that I do on a farm that will downscale well for people who are interested in becoming backyard homesteaders," said Jenn Djambazov, the farmer at the 77-acre Community Farm of Simsbury. Crops are primarily grown for Simsbury's food pantry and other area food access programs.

The major consideration, she said, was to be realistic about the amount of

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time available to take on additional chores.

"Gardening is pretty hard work; don't set yourself up to fail. Think what you want to get out of it," she said, noting that a 10-foot by 20-foot garden "is going to take a couple of hours a week" not counting the additional time needed at the beginning and end of the season.

"It's a lot easier to say, 'Awesome,' and do more next year than become overwhelmed your first year and never do this again," Djambazov said.

She has a friend who loves to can, so she grows crops such as beets and green beans that she preserves for the rest of the year.

"Others just want to go out at the end of the day and cut a salad to eat. Some want to have chickens and learn to keep bees. Some just want their kids to go outside and get dirty," Djambazov said.

Once you know what you want, you can plan accordingly.

"What you want to get out of it will tell you where you start," she said.

She recommends books, videos, articles and other materials by Elliot Coleman, whom she called "the modern New Englander's guru on backyard farming in a way that makes sense."

"He works small scale," she said, and keeps things simple. He urges homeowners to use all the space they have, offering thrifty ideas for building with repurposed materials.

Talking to local farmers is another valuable source of information.

"Stop at roadside stands and strike up a conversation," she suggested, also recommending attending presentations by local garden clubs.

Now is a good time to prepare a plot for planting next year, Djambazov said. First, she recommends paying attention to sun and shadow.

West Simsbury homesteader Jon Gooch agreed and recommended mapping out the sun and shade patterns of trees, structures and fences over the seasons to determine the area with the maximum hours of direct sunlight.

Together with his wife, Margaret, and their daughter, Lilia, they have kept a 45-square-foot garden for four years.

He said he has found the best method for gardening is raised beds that are 8-10 inches tall, 4 feet wide and as long as desired. The long side, he said, "should run along the East-West axis so that optimum sunshine falls for the longest period of the day during the growing season."

If the area is currently a lawn, placing layers of old carpet or cardboard down in late summer will effectively kill off underlying weeds and grass by next spring.

Construct a boundary using untreated lumber or concrete blocks, remove any carpet or cardboard, then fill the beds with a soil containing organic compost material, Gooch said.

"You'll always have a better garden if you start preparing the year before," Djambazov said, noting that it's the organic materials added to the soil that produce healthy crops.

"The nutrients come from what's in the ground," Djambazov said.

Animals can help transition a lawn into a garden.

Chickens, for instance, will eat all the grass, seeds and bugs while also fertilizing the soil.

Costing about $3 at local feed supply stores, chickens need shelter and water. In return, they'll keep ticks, mosquitoes, grubs and mice away, she said.

Haley Billipp, who is farming the same land in Newington that her ancestors worked for generations, raises chickens. Her 1 ½-year-old daughter likes to feed them.

Because most towns do not require agricultural zoning to keep chickens, it is a reasonable undertaking.

"It's doable," she said. "You can go on Craigslist and find chicks for sale, but also little coops and mobile chicken yards that people build and sell for $500 to $1,000."

Raising chickens requires effort, and Billipp guesses she spends as much on the feed as she would the expensive organic eggs she would otherwise buy, but said there is more to consider than finances.

"You know exactly what you're getting and they're a lot fresher, so they taste a lot better," she said.

Two added bonuses are the fact chickens are fun for children, and chickens eat table scraps and other organic waste that would otherwise end up in a compost pile or the waste stream.

When it comes to animals in the

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backyard, Gooch said that chances are the need will be to keep out wildlife such as chipmunks, squirrels, mice, deer and bear. He recommends a 6-foot-high mesh fence plus a foot high's worth of tiny-holed mesh vertically affixed at ground level.

Farming, however, does not require a garden plot. It could involve planting fruit trees such as pear and cherry.

"There's a lot of things you can put in your ground that are a longer-time investment, but once they start producing, they will be established for decades," Djambazov said, noting, "Connecticut has beautiful ground for blueberries."

Asparagus and rhubarb are two other perennial crops that, once established, will produce for decades.

Gardening can also be done in pots, and Djambazov has worked with senior centers and assisted living facilities to design raised beds so people in those communities can get their hands dirty.

While she composts in a huge pile turned with a tractor, small-scale composting bins can be built or purchased that will tuck into any landscape and turn garden refuse, leaves, grass clippings and food scraps into a nutrient-rich soil enhancer.

Efforts to homestead may be difficult at first, but with each season it will be easier.

"Experiment with it. You'll be able to see if what you're doing is working – either the plants grow or they don't."

Gooch said, "Preparation really is a huge part of the process, along with the realization that there are as many disappointments as there are triumphs."

Experience has taught him that "backyard gardening is 90 percent mental and 100 percent physical. If that doesn't seem to add up, it's because it doesn't. There are no shortcuts, easy streets or opt-outs. Mother Nature is an unforgiving task-mistress and does not cease in her efforts to confound even the best laid plans."

Yet, he said, there are rewards – "the delicious taste of home-grown produce and a personal sense of achievement."

Homesteading is both a mind-set and a lifestyle, Billipp said.

Modern homesteading does not need to take place off the grid on a huge expanse of land – it can occur in suburbia, apartments, planned communities and cities. Canning, seed harvesting, herbal medicine, sewing, soap making, home brewing, candle making, hunting and fishing, bartering and waste management are all part of the picture.

It means making choices that use less energy, produce less waste and are more wholesome.

"Buy things that will last a long time or have multiple uses," she suggested. "Make your soda bottle into a birdfeeder or try to research some craft to reuse items rather than buying new things."

It's about doing more for yourself, Billipp said. **NL**

Sipping

Meyer Lemon and Sage Presse

"Very tasty and perfect for summer," said Judith Gosnell Kempe of Cherry Brook Garden Club who submitted this recipe used at the group's annual luncheon last year.

4 quartered medium lemons juiced
½ cup fresh sage leaves
1 cup simple syrup
(½ c sugar, ½ c water)
24 ounces club soda

Place the sage leaves and simple syrup in a blender. Process and strain with fine sieve. Adding ½ teaspoon salt to entire mixture is optional. Add lemon juice and divide mixture into eight glasses filled with ice. Add club soda just before serving. Serves eight.

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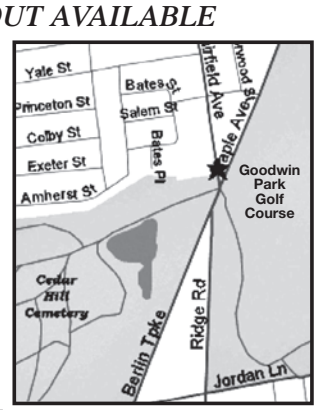

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Sick Since Sunday consists of Pete Contrastano on bass, Jim Briggs on drums and Lee Steel on guitar and vocals.

Photos by Robin Oakes Photography

Lee Steel and Sick Since Sunday are doing fine

Long-time musician enjoys performing a wide variety of music

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Lee Steel found his musical inspiration in an unlikely place – on television.

"I've been playing music since I was in junior high school. I was originally fascinated by TV shows like 'The Monkees' and the Beatles cartoons," he said.

"Around the time I went into seventh grade, I got my first guitar and started playing music with some friends. It's just snowballed throughout my entire life. It's something that's always been there," Steel said.

He is from the Tampa, Florida, area and has lived in town for about 18 years. He began singing in church when he was 6 or 7 and played with bands throughout the South, including touring in Florida and Georgia.

"That would have been through the late '70s and early '80s. I was in a couple of bands that made it really close to something bigger. It was during the early days of MTV. It's nothing anyone would ever heard of, but we made a couple of 45s and tried to do the best we could at the time," Steel said.

"I've always played music that would be considered pop in a way. Even when I was doing all originals in some of the bands in Florida, it was still pretty mainstream, nothing obscure, not heavy metal. It was all pop rock, danceable kind of stuff."

Steel, who works full time as an information technology support professional, was in a band called Midlife Crisis for about 14 years.

"Midlife Crisis was an oldies band, a '60s, '70s band. In 14 years we hadn't progressed from what it started out to be. There was no

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growth happening there; we went on at a steady pace," Steel said.

He had put his own music aside to play in the band.

"I kind of put my thing to rest. The three of us got so busy we didn't have time to do anything else."

About three years ago, Steel and a his buddies Jim Briggs, a drummer, and Pete Contrastano, a bass player, started playing open mic nights.

"All three of us were playing in different bands and none of the people we were in bands with wanted to do very much, and we all started going out to different open mic nights together, just to have something to do during the week," Steel explained.

"Jimmy had worked for me as a fill-in drummer. We had always agreed at some point that we would be in a band together. The three of us met through seeing each other from local clubs."

While at an open mic night, they came up with what they thought was a temporary name for their group – Sick Since Sunday.

"We thought it would be a funny tongue twister name for the open mic [host] to introduce us. We never had any attention of it being our band name," he said.

It refers to the excuse that people often give their bosses when calling in sick on a Monday morning.

"We had three or four songs to do. We put our own spin on it, did some funny stuff and it caught on. The momentum built up and we had to do a whole show together because too many people wanted to see us," Steel said.

The timing was right for the new band.

"Pete's band fell apart, Jimmy's band was slowing down," he said.

Sick Since Sunday has been playing together ever since.

"We play almost every Friday and Saturday. We're busy all the time," Steel said.

"I've been playing music at night and working during the day for so long, I don't know any other way."

– Lee Steel

The group plays at bars and restaurants, as well as events, mostly in Connecticut, but also in Massachusetts and other areas. The three men continue to be friends, as well as band mates.

"We have a good rapport, we work well together. Before I joined I wasn't into the music we were doing. He's broadened my horizons in that direction," Briggs, a Bristol resident, said.

"The three of us get along just like brothers. The three of us work hard to get the sound we have. I've known him 11 years now and he's a very good musician."

Contrastano, another Bristol resident, also enjoys the friendship.

"I enjoy the camaraderie and I enjoy playing for people. It's just something I've done since I was 13 years old, too. My first job with a band when I was 13 years old," he said.

Contrastano has known Steel for about five years.

"He's very dedicated; he's been playing for years. The thing that amazes me most is he's got a really, really good voice. It always fascinates me how someone could sing and play guitar at the same time. It seems like for him it comes natural," he said.

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Photos by Robin Oakes Photography

Musician Lee Steel plays guitar and does vocals for Sick Since Sunday.

They play a wide range of music including tunes from Red Hot Chili Peppers, Nirvana, Stone Temple Pilots, Lady Gaga and Cake.

"We also have some '60s songs we've kind of freshened up and made new again," he said about playing tunes such as the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby."

Their shows feature more than just music.

"We're very entertaining. We have a fantastic light show and we play songs that are different than what most people play. We have a lot of props that we use, like hats and costumes. We try to make it as fun as possible."

Sick Since Sunday rehearses in the lower part of Steel's Newington home. They typically rehearse at least once a week, although they might skip it if they're playing an open mic night. The late nights don't bother him.

"I've been playing music at night and working during the day for so long, I don't know any other way. I think my body's conditioned for it," he said.

"Sometimes we go out two, three times during the week. We go to open mics because it's fun. A lot of times I'm out past midnight and I'm right here in the morning at 7:30 like I'm supposed to be."

They keep in touch with fans on a Facebook page and through ReverbNation. They do a Facebook update every Monday morning that talks about upcoming shows.

"We put out our own spoof on 'Rolling Stone' called 'Rolling Sick,' Steel said.

They give away merchandise, such as T-shirts, rubber bracelets, tattoos and buttons in an effort to promote the band.

"We give a lot of stuff away just to put the name out there," said Steel, who would eventually like to integrate some original music into the shows.

"Right now, it's been more about trying to attract as many people to shows as possible," he said. "Once we get to the point where we're seeing big turnouts at our shows, we'll start making the transition over to putting out some original material to see how far that will go."

Despite his years of experience, he is pragmatic about his abilities.

"I'm no shredder by any means. I'm just a good all-around guitar player. I sing better than I play guitar. For me, it's more about the performance, the feedback from the audience. I enjoy that part of it more than any other part of it," he said.

"We're three old guys that are just trying to be hip again. We're giving it one last shot. We feel like it's our last chance to be cool."

He has a promise to those who come hear them play.

"If you come to a Sick Since Sunday show, you're going to have a smile on your face and you're going to have fun all night." **NL**

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Telling tales

Matthew Dicks is an author, storyteller, teacher

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Courtesy photo

If not for a mediocre grade on a high school English assignment, Matthew Dicks might never have launched a writing career.

"I didn't take school very seriously," he said.

Then came an assignment for the high school junior to write a piece of satire.

"It was the first time I could write something I was excited about," he said.

His teacher was not impressed and gave him a B-minus.

"And I was mad. He was short and bald. Those men tend to be funny or angry, and he was angry. We yelled at each other in front of the room," recalled Dicks.

He was offered the opportunity to read his piece to the class. If they agreed it was satire, his grade would rise to an A-minus. If not, he would get a C-minus for the assignment.

"I was two sentences in before I heard a girl laugh. It was a girl who I loved and it was the best sound in the world. When I finished, everyone was laughing," he said.

The teacher asked for a show of hands if the students thought the piece was satire.

"Every hand went up," Dicks said. "That was the moment I realized I could be a writer. I made girls laugh. I made the teacher look stupid. I felt like that changed my future in a way."

He launched his writing career by writing term papers for classmates, $50 for un-typed, $100 for typed. Still, it was a long road from the 1988 satire incident to having his first book – "Something Missing: A Novel" – published in 2009.

"I had been trying to write novels for years," said Dicks, who simultaneously earned degrees from Trinity College (English) and the University of Saint Joseph (education).

"It took me a while to figure out what I was doing. I'd always wanted to write since I was kid. I told my parents I wanted to teach for pleasure and write for a living."

While he achieved the goal of doing both, the roles are reversed.

"In 1999 I got hired by West Hartford. I've been there ever since. It's been great," Dicks said.

He teaches at Wolcott School and is a former West Hartford teacher of the year and a finalist for Connecticut teacher of the year. He's written several books, recently handing in one to his editor and starting a new one. "Perfect Comeback" came out last fall.

"I tend to have a lot of projects going on at a single time. I really enjoy writing the novels. I don't know where the novels are going. Writing the novel is almost like reading the novel for me," he said.

His books are all different from one another, which can make it a challenge to pick up steady readers, but his work returns to a couple of similar themes.

"As people read them, they start to find themes that were unintended by me leak out of me. I'm interested in the idea that we tell kids to be themselves, to blaze their own trail. If you do that as an adult, you often get punished for it," he said.

"I'm interested in people who are willing to be themselves when no one else wants them to be that way. People who are daring to be different. I find great nobility in that. The person who is a hero in the book is never recognized as the hero except by one person," Dicks said.

He has set a couple of titles in Newington. He's also changed his process of writing through the years.

"I had a white board and would post notes and outline books. I would write 30,000 words and give up," he said.

Several years ago, he went to visit an elderly relative in Boca Raton, Florida, who lived "in an old person compound surrounded by golf courses." While Dicks enjoys playing golf, his wife Elysha didn't tell him about the courses, so he didn't have his clubs. He also discovered that there was no Wi-Fi or cable.

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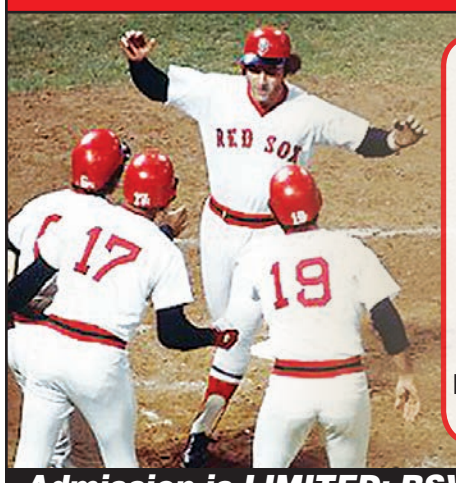

Without any distractions, he started writing his first novel, "Something Missing."

"I just had the idea for a character. I thought it was going to be short story. In desperation, I said I'd write a short story and discovered I'm not a writer who's supposed to plot things. I went to Trinity and no one bothered to tell me. If I hadn't gotten bored in Boca, I probably would have given up," he said.

He writes every day and has a popular blog.

"The day my daughter was born, I was in the delivery room with a computer on one side of the room and my wife on the other," Dicks said.

Dicks, whose novels have been translated into more than 25 languages, is also the author of the rock opera "The Clowns" and the musicals "Caught in the Middle" and "Sticks & Stones." He has written comic books for Double Take comics, is a columnist for Seasons magazine and has published work in Reader's Digest, Hartford Courant, Huffington Post and Christian Science Monitor.

Dicks is also a 23-time Moth StorySLAM champion and four-time GrandSLAM champion whose stories have been featured on their nationally syndicated Moth Radio Hour and the weekly podcast. He has also told stories for This American Life, TED, The Colin McEnroe Show, The Story Collider, The Liar Show, Literary Death Match, The Mouth and others.

He has performed in such venues as the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Bynam Theater of Pittsburgh, Boston University and Hartford's Infinity Hall. Dicks began listening to The Moth podcast eight years ago on the advice of friends.

"I was homeless; I was arrested and tried for a crime I didn't commit; I was the victim of a really horrific crime; I've had a bunch of terrible things happen. Friends said, 'You should go to The Moth and tell those crazy stories.' And then I didn't for a long time because I was afraid," he said.

"In 2011 it just became too much for me. I felt like a fraud. I wanted to say I did it and never have to do it again, so I went to New York and put my name in a hat and prayed, 'Just don't pick me.' They pulled my name and I did not move," he added.

"It occurred to me that no one in the place knew who I was. I took the stage and I hated it until I started speaking into the microphone and then I loved it. I won the slam. It was one of best nights of my life. I was hooked."

Catherine Burns, artistic director of The Moth, offered praise.

"Matt just has an unbelievable way of telling stories that are so specific to him and so deeply human in a way that many people find relatable. No matter how the crazy the story is, there's something that people will connect to and that's a real gift," Burns said.

Dicks and his wife started a storytelling event at Real Art Ways in Hartford. He has some advice for those who want to give it a try.

"The best stories are the little stories," he said.

For example, he tells about when he was in a car accident at age 17 and his heart stopped beating at the side of the road.

"The story ends up being later on in the ER," he said.

His parents went to check on the car before going to the hospital. He asks a nurse to call McDonald's and tell them he won't be at work that day, which brings a group of friends to the hospital.

"The ER waiting room fills up with these kids, teenagers. They can't let my friends in. One by one, each stands in the doorway and they tell me they love me, they tell me horrible things that make me laugh. That's what you remember about that story," he said.

"The important thing is that I remember those doors opening and my friends were there. We all know a time when we felt alone. I'm always looking for the little moments in the big moments or the little moments that change you in some fundamental way; those are the good [stories].

Kim Damokosh, a health care business consultant in West Hartford, is a fan of The Moth.

"My husband and I became good friends with he and his wife Elysha through trips to The Moth in New York and also a book club we started with one other couple. Matt's colorful and sometimes painful/difficult background provide plenty of material for

"We tell kids to be themselves, to blaze their own trail. If you do that as an adult, you often get punished for it."

– Matthew Dicks

his storytelling/writing," she said.

"But his willingness to be entirely candid about these experiences, his own flaws, pain and ultimately the personal growth that results from each of these vignettes are key to his ability to connect with an audience/readers. Matt's stories and books are almost always emotionally complex but conveyed through relatable characters and situations that make these emotions accessible to readers and listeners."

Dicks teaches storytelling and public speaking to individuals, corporations and school districts around the world. He most recently taught at Yale University, University of Connecticut Law School, Purdue University, Connecticut Historical Society, Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health and Graded School in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

He is the creator and co-host of Boy vs. Girl, a podcast about gender and gender stereotypes. He's also a wedding DJ, minister and a life coach. **NL**

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News roundup

Courtesy photos

Celebrating literacy

Celebrating literacy

Ruth Chaffee School recently held its first Family Literacy Night. It was filled with dinner, hands-on activities and games. Each student and his or her siblings received a free book to take home and enjoy.

More than 60 families were represented. The concept came true with the help of learning tutor Erin Gilbert, a graduate student at Central Connecticut State University.

Learn CPR, first aid

Newington Emergency Medical Services is offering classes to teach residents the life-savings skills of CPR and first aid. Monthly courses are taught by professional emergency medical technicians who are certified by the American Heart Association.

Upcoming classes are: Baby-sitting on June 28, Heartsaver First Aid on July 26, Heartsaver CPR/AED on Aug. 23, Baby-sitting on Sept. 27, Heartsaver First Aid on Oct. 25, Heartsaver CPR/AED on Nov. 22 and Baby-sitting on Dec. 27.

All classes begin at 6 p.m. To learn more visit newingtonems.com.

Basketball team honored

The Town Council honored the Newington High School boys basketball team at its April 26 meeting. The team posted a perfect 20-0 regular season record and won the CCC South Blue Division.

It was also ranked second in both the CCC Tournament and CIAC Class L State Tournament, where the boys made it as far as the semifinals, the first time an NHS squad has accomplished that since 1975. Junior guard Jared Simmons broke the school scoring record during the final game of the season and coach Scot Wenzel posted his 200th career victory.

In addition to Simmons, other members of the team are Connor Buckley, J.P. deCastro, Louis Egbuna, Cameron Fedina, Brett Frank (captain), Nicholas Guardarrama, James Holley, Andres Ithier-Vicenty, Cooper Johnson, Matthew McKinnon, Pablo Ortiz (captain), Dante Phillip, Roberto Sanchez and Zachary Tinkham (captain).

New cantor appointed

Temple Sinai has appointed a new cantor and soloist, Sabrina Lipton, who has served the Greenwich Reform Synagogue since 2009. She will join the local synagogue full time on Sept. 2 after working part time during July and August.

She succeeds Cantor Donna Gordon, who retired at the end of 2015. In addition to leading the musical aspects of temple services, Cantor Lipton will assist Rabbi Jeffrey Bennett with lifecycle events, teach music in the religious school, and conduct other educational activities for children and adults.

Cubs clean the park

Den 6 of Newington Cub Scout Pack 347, along with a few siblings and friends, spent the afternoon of April 20 cleaning up Mill Pond Park. Matthew Greig, CJ Greig, Alex Smith, Sarah Smith, Tom Stack, Logan Shaw, Aiden Stegmaier, Anthony Bieszczad and Danny Bieszczad filled three large trash bags with of garbage collected from the town's largest park.

A symphonic experience

Fifth-grade students from John Wallace Middle School attended the Young People's Concert presented by the New Britain Symphony Orchestra. It took place in Welte Auditorium on the campus of Central Connecticut State University.

CABE honors student leaders

Four Newington Public Schools students were selected to receive the annual CABE Student Leadership Award. They were chosen from among their peers for exhibiting distinguished leadership in school activities and daily life.

The students are Alan Chow and Molly Rusgrove of John Wallace Middle School and Connor Buckley and Kimberly Nguyen of Newington High School.

Top students honored

Superintendent William Collins recently honored the outstanding students from each school for the month of April.

Top students honored

They are, back from left, Kyle Tinker-Palaia of John Wallace Middle School, Caroline Lynch of Martin Kellogg Middle School, Alexander Stolarczyk of Newington High School and Adam Alexander of Elizabeth Green School; front from left, Jillian Webster of Anna Reynolds School, Seth Ostrowski of Ruth Chaffee School and Molly Ellis of John Paterson School.

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Sprucing up Beacon Park

Sprucing up Beacon Park

Cub Scouts from Den 9, Pack 347, cleaned up Beacon Park and collected more than eight full bags of trash. Among them were Joe Gionfriddo, Adam Redman, Zach Gogluicci, Tyler Giudice and Aiden Bengston.

Get a free dental cleaning

People over the age of 60 who live in Berlin, Newington, Rocky Hill or Wethersfield are eligible for a free dental cleaning courtesy of the Central Connecticut Health District and the North Central Agency on Aging.

Donations are welcome, but not required. There is a limit of five patients per day, so reserve a spot by calling Health Educator Lori DiPietro at 860-665-8571.

Money for charity

A fundraiser was held recently at John Wallace Middle School, with the money going to the Make A Wish Foundation. Approximately $900 was collected.

Two health programs planned

The town Department of Human Services is offering a pair of community programs during the month of June. Admission is free, but donations will be accepted.

Executive Functioning Across the Life Span is scheduled for 6 p.m. June 2 in the town hall auditorium. Laura DiGalbo from the state Bureau of Rehabilitative Services will speak about the development of and eventual decline in brain power throughout our life span.

Safe Dating for Teens is the topic at 6 p.m. June 16 in the same location. Linda Blozie and Wendy Botes-Casanda from the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence will speak about healthy and positive relationships, primarily for teenagers, and how parents can support and encourage their teen's relationship decisions.

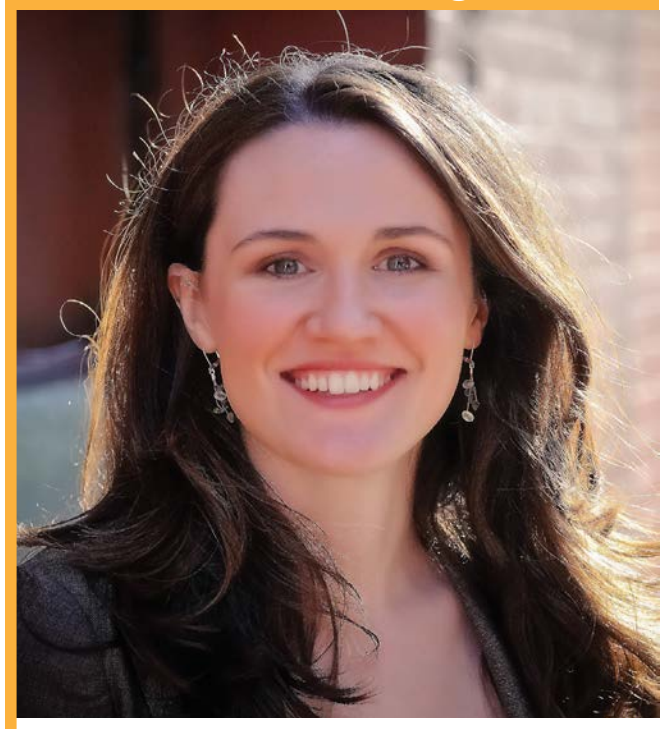
Rotarians attend conference

Opening night at the Rotary District 7890 Annual Conference in Hyannis, Massachusetts, featured a Hawaiian luau. Attending from the Rotary Club of Newington were, from left, LeeAnn Morrone, secretary; Dave Tedeschi, incoming secretary; Gary Andreski; Cherilyn Spatola, president; Claire Silverstein and husband Ed Silverstein, past president.

The conference was held to celebrate the achievements of the district's 60 Rotary clubs from northern Connecticut and western Massachusetts and to highlight global accomplishments of its chartering organization, Rotary International. **NL**

Rotarians attend conference

Tickets on sale through 5/31



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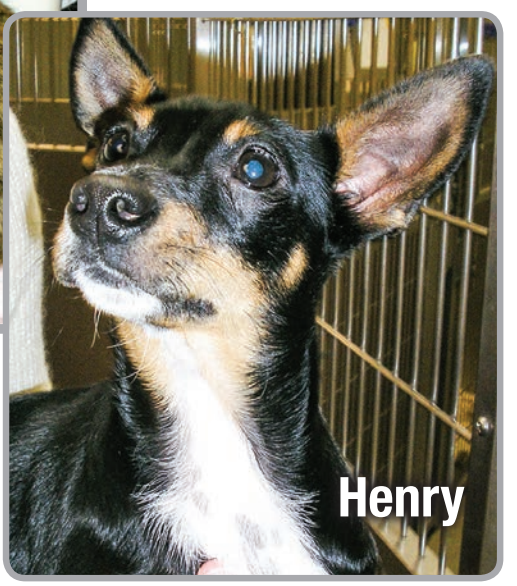

Meet Henry, Spot and Precious

Henry is an energetic Chihuahua mix. Just 5 months old, he's full of play and affection. He would be a good fit in any type of home and would enjoy children of any age, as well as other pets. He needs training, exercise and socialization.

Spot and **Precious** are a brother-sister pair that can be adopted either together or separately. He's black and white and 7 years old. She's a calico/tortoise mix and 4 years old. They are OK with other cats, older children and perhaps even some dogs.

Inquiries about adoption may be made at the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Road, Newington. Call 860-594-4500. More information, including videos, can be found online at cthumane.org. Click on "Adopt" and "Newington." The Connecticut Humane Society is a private organization and has no time limits for adoption.

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Spending school vacation week at the library

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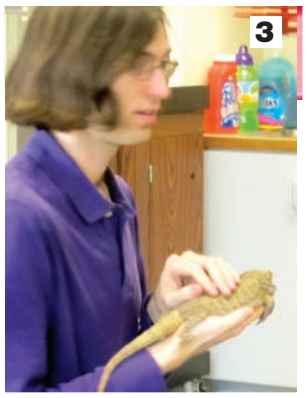
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Courtesy photos

1. Kiara Rossi reads to Darla, a reading therapy dog, with trainer Lynn Goldfarb. The program is called Tales to Tails. **2.** Crystal Nwaogu, Cora Tracey, Lily Carra and Mailia Nieves enjoy their "sweet pizza" during Pizza Storytime. **3.** Ian Robertson from the Children's Museum displays a bearded dragon during the Encountering Dragons program. **4.** The Lucy Robbins Welles Library offered a variety of activities for children during school vacation week in April. As part of a program called Dewey the Cat Cozytime Stories, teen volunteer Quinn Raymond plays cat bingo with Alex and Gabriel Trifone.

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Why slow down?

Ed Silverstein prefers an active and engaged life

by Mark Jahne
Editor

To Ed Silverstein, age is just a number. Why stop doing what you enjoy just because of that?

Silverstein is 78 years old but he remains actively involved in those volunteer and service activities that matter to him. He owned Shear Success Hair Salons for many years before selling the business and retiring in 2010.

"I was 23 years on the Berlin Turnpike and I had a second store about 16 years on the Silas Deane in Wethersfield," he said.

He has a long history of community service with the Newington Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club of Newington. He's more active than ever with those two groups now.

"I [also] do volunteer work at the Farmington food pantry. I help the clients who come in," he said. "I believe you have to stay active physically and mentally."

He has been a member of the chamber for 25 years and has long served as its treasurer. He can often be found in its office on Main Street in town center.

"I opened my business in 1986 and joined the chamber shortly after," he said. "I got involved with the 7 a.m. Network shortly after joining."

That was followed by helping out with the chamber's largest annual event, its home and business showcase. He became a member of its board of directors.

That was at a time when the chamber was splitting off from its previous affiliation with the Metro Hartford Chamber of Commerce. Newington was going it alone, without the financial or other support Metro provided.

"I believe you have to stay active physically and mentally."
– Ed Silverstein

"When we became independent of Hartford we were concerned about our finances. I offered to serve as treasurer for a year or two until we caught our breath. I'm still the treasurer," Silverstein said.

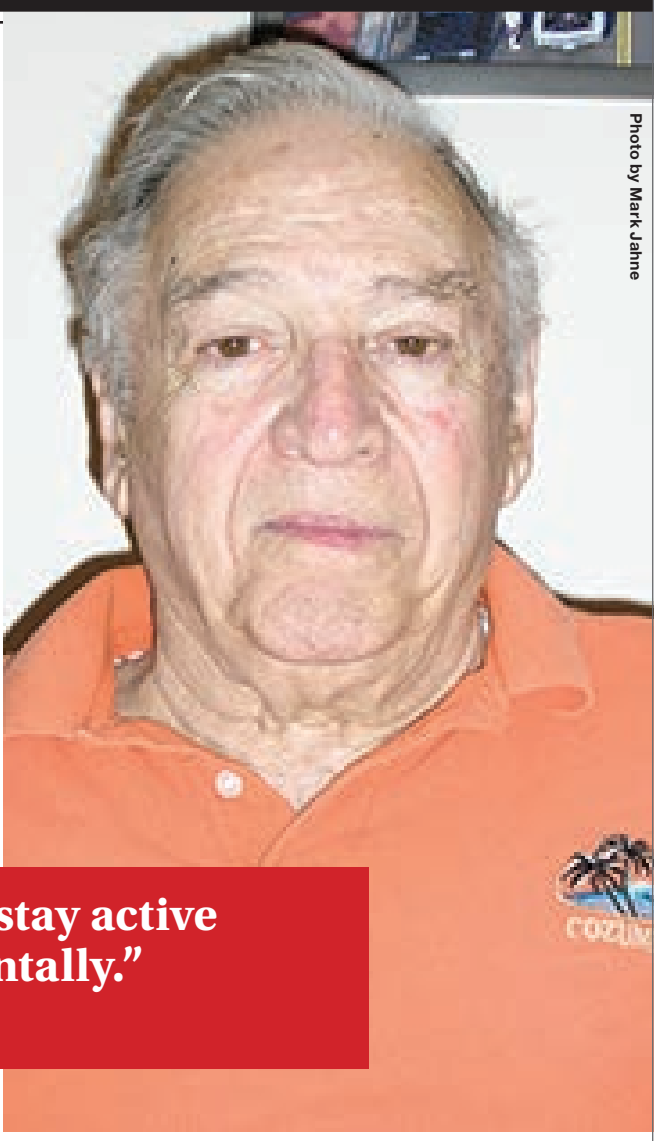

Photo by Mark Jahne

Ed Silverstein is heavily involved with both the Newington Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club of Newington.

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"I find it very fulfilling. These people are close friends at this point," he added. "I try to make all the events."

He considers what he does now as giving back and enjoys helping new businesses become established in town.

"The community was good to me. The business was successful," he said.

"We do a lot with the school system," he said of the chamber.

That includes funding different programs and scholarships for students who are interested in small business careers. Chamber Executive Director Gail Whitney praised his dedication and commitment.

"Ed is the backbone of this organization. We are very appreciative of what he does," she said.

She is confident knowing that the finances are always in good shape under his guiding hand. They spend at least one day a week together in the office and have come to know each other well.

"We've developed quite a friendship," Whitney said.

Silverstein joined Rotary in 2002 and does his best to attend its weekly luncheon meetings and special events. He joined its board of directors, served as club president for two years and now holds the title of immediate past president.

"I felt it was a time in my life I wanted to give back. I'm so impressed with what Rotary does," he said.

The international nonprofit is by definition a service organization and operates under the guiding principle of "service above self." Each club around the world participates in, or gives money to, community-oriented projects.

"Every year we give money to social services for backpacks and school supplies," Silverstein said.

Funds raised by the club will be used later this year to purchase equipment for the volunteer fire department, a large screen television for the senior center and for exercise programs there.

Rotary is also purchasing a replacement projector for the Newington Children's Theatre Company. The club's major annual event is a golf tournament that raises money for the Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation.

"We donated $25,000 to them last year," he said proudly.

Local Rotary clubs also participate in worldwide initiatives such as Polio Plus, dedicated to eradicating polio from the face of the earth. They also purchase equipment to provide clean water in countries such as the Philippines and Guatemala for villages that lack a safe water supply.

Silverstein is energized by the camaraderie of Rotary. He likes the fact that so many of his fellow members are truly active with the club.

He manages to find time for family, too. He and his wife Claire have been married for 55 years. They have three children, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild. **NL**

Quotations from famous people about aging

"Wrinkles should merely indicate where the smiles have been.
– Mark Twain

"My grandmother started walking five miles a day when she was 60. She's 97 now, and we don't know where the heck she is."
– Ellen DeGeneres

"The older I grow, the more I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom."
– H.L. Mencken

"One should never trust a woman who tells one her real age. A woman who would tell one that would tell one anything."
– Oscar Wilde

"Just remember, when you're over the hill, you begin to pick up speed."
– Charles M. Schulz

"When I was a boy, the Dead Sea was only sick."
– George Burns

Sources: goodreads.com, brainyquote.com

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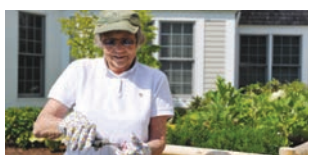

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Getting away

European river cruises, Italy, Ireland and Florida remain popular destinations

by Lynn Woike
LIFE Staff

"Today's seniors are traveling more than ever before. Being retired, they have the time and tend to plan longer trips, too. Today's seniors are also much more adventurous and active than their parents were," Martha Kirsche at Wethersfield Travel said.

Recent senior groups have traveled to France, Italy, Scotland, Costa Rica and the Canadian Rockies.

Regardless of the destination, she said, "Escorted tours are also a very popular option for seniors because all the details of the day are already taken care of for you."

There are many choices.

"When choosing an escorted tour it is important to select the itinerary you want, the pace of travel you desire – how many nights in each destination – and the level of activity," Kirsche said.

"Some older adults would prefer a quiet bird walk through the rain forest in Costa Rica, where others really want to zip line through the trees."

Suzanne Aresco, travel manager at AAA, also finds guided vacations to be the most popular type of vacation for older people. There are trips that do not change hotels every night, that have later start times for tours and building in some free time, yet getting to all the must-see sites.

"More of a relaxed pace is something I'm certainly seeing for senior citizens," she said.

She added there are trips to many destinations that accommodate travelers wishing to go at a slower pace. Aresco said most people have a sense of what country they want to visit and know what they want to see. Italy remains an extremely popular destination for seniors.

"The other type of travel that is extremely popular, especially with seniors, are European river cruises, with some of the most popular rivers being the Rhine and the Danube. This is a great way to travel right through the heart of Central Europe," she said.

The boat typically holds only 150 people. You only unpack once and trips tend to be all inclusive.

"The boat is a floating hotel," she said.

While most river cruise boats can accommodate special needs, large cruise ships are well equipped to meet any mobility challenges and travel obstacles. They have handicap accessible staterooms and health care professionals onboard.

"When we have someone in a situation like that, we can work with an escorted tour partner to make accommodations," Aresco said.

Ireland is a popular destination

"Ireland is an incredibly easy destination. It's easy to get around, there's not a language barrier, they're very friendly to the U.S. visitor," she said.

Those looking to travel there will be able to fly nonstop daily from Bradley to Dublin on Aer Lingus beginning in September.

Sharyn Holmes, senior center coordinator for the town of Farmington, said that health, finances and whether or not

someone has a spouse with whom to travel typically impact choices made by those in their 70s and 80s.

"Travel gets more difficult as they age," she said.

Older adults may have limitations, in which case, "they do need someone watching out for them when a special need arises, someone they can lean on if something comes up," Holmes said.

"We do more day trips because they have more difficulty traveling far," she said. "A lot of seniors don't like to fly anymore."

Be they for a day or two weeks, she finds structured tours are the most popular.

Having a partner also makes a huge difference, Holmes said, not only for companionship, but when it comes to accommodations – the single rate is $100 or more than the double-occupancy per person cost.

When she plans trips, she typically chooses those that use only one or two hotels for a 10-day period.

"They don't like bouncing from hotel to hotel," she said of older travelers.

For that reason, she also sees seniors taking advantage of European river cruises. Italy and Ireland remain popular destinations, Holmes added.

She also knows of many seniors who travel to Florida for the winter months.

"There is something for everyone and the important part of planning a trip for seniors is to match them with the trip that is right for them," Kirsche said.

Friendship Tours Vice President Amy Schoen noted that motor coach trips are popular with people of a certain age who don't want to drive. An added benefit is that someone else has already worked out the details, purchased tickets, selected a restaurant, etc.

The company offers day trips throughout New England, New York and New Jersey, with overnight stays of one to eight nights in such places as Myrtle Beach, S.C., and Washington, D.C.

"The reason we're called [Friendship Travel] is because we believe that friendships are formed through travel," Schoen said.

No matter the destination, Aresco strongly urges people to work with a professional travel advisor who has knowledge of destinations and travel options.

"Don't try to do it yourself. We don't charge for our services and we're going to be there through the entire process to help guild you and advise you," she said.

While a AAA membership is not required to take advantage of the agency's travel assistance, members do get special benefits. **NL**

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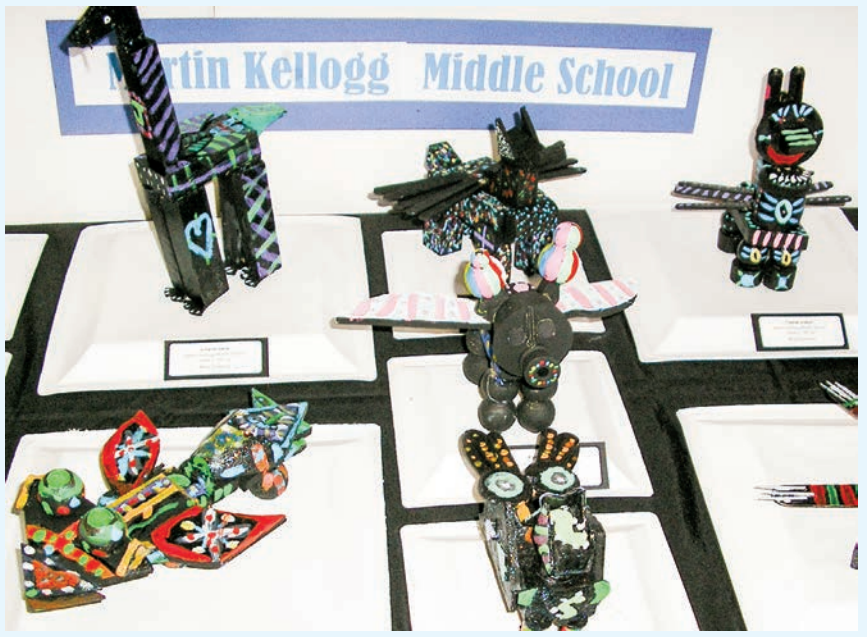
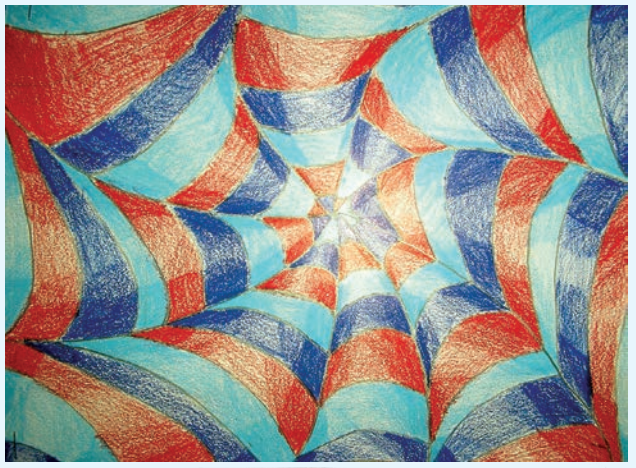


Students at Martin Kellogg Middle School created these wood sculptures.

These two women were painted by Newington High School pupil Natalia Petrakowski.

Photos by Mark Jahne

These brightly colored shapes came from the mind of Shivan Patel of John Wallace Middle School.

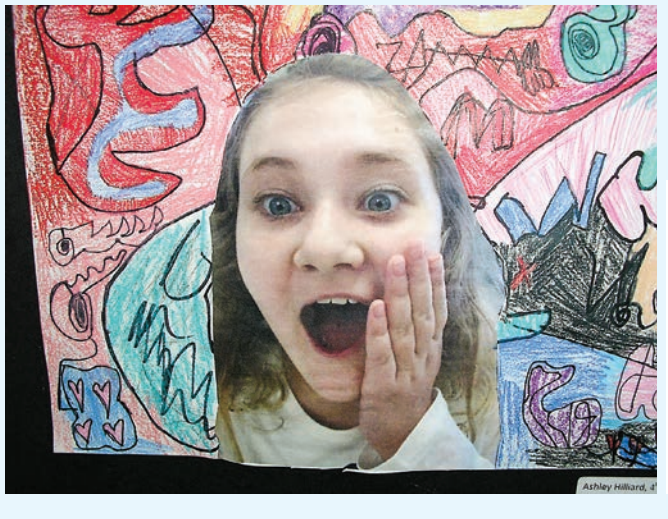


The artistic creations of Newington Public Schools students in grades K-12 were recently displayed on the top floor of Town Hall. Each of the seven schools had its own section.

Pablo Picasso inspired this figure painted by Krystie Gervais of Elizabeth Green School.

Hannah Nystrom of Anna Reynolds School gets credit for this piece of art.

Semaj Griffiths of John Paterson School painted "Cardinals in Winter."



Ashley Hilliard of Ruth Chaffee School combined hand-drawn art with a photograph.

Slice of LIFE

photos by Allie Rivera

The Newington Chamber of Commerce hosted its 24th Annual Home and Business Showcase in conjunction with the Taste of Newington April 30 in the gymnasium and cafeteria of Newington High School. For the first time, the expo included a Craft Corner of vendors with homemade items for sale, as well as a stage set up in the corner of the gym for performances from local dance schools, musicians and magicians.

24th Annual Home & Business Showcase

1. Mark Brennan, Ray Rodriguez, Will Hernes and Billy Hernes of Ferrari's Appliance were located in the doorway to the event as one of the main sponsors of the showcase. **2.** Deanna Reney, owner of Karma's Closet consignment shop, had a full display of clothes and accessories, many of which were showcased during a fashion show held that afternoon on the event stage. **3.** Michael Garuti, left, and store manager Beth Brodeur of the Subway sandwich shop in Newington Center were prepared for the Taste of Newington portion of the day with tables full of sandwiches. **4.** Debbie McMullin of People's Products and Evolutionary Home Energy Solutions was all smiles as she greeted everyone who stopped by her display. **5.** Visitors at the showcase had the opportunity to show their hometown pride with a variety of shirts offered for sale by Matthew McTeague, owner of Newington T-shirts. **6.** Students from Studio 3 dance school were one of the groups to perform on the new stage. **7.** Jordan Lohr, a server at TJ's on Cedar restaurant, was ready to serve a variety of treats as part of the Taste of Newington. **8.** Urvashi Ghetia, left, and Beata Stawski of Liberty Bank handed out pens and small trinkets at their booth. **9.** Taylor Therapy Center was a gold sponsor of the showcase and has been since nearly its beginning. Owner Joan-Alice Taylor is second from left. With her are Suzanne Baillargeon, left, Debbie Peruta, second from right, and Debbra Konopaske, right. **10.** Students from Newington High School's Tech Support and Student Council were in attendance, showing off the Newington Now app and offering free coffee. They are, from left, Emily Carle, Kim Nguyen, Shihao Zhai, Patrick Boucher and Lauren Theriault.

June calendar

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

1 Just a Story and a Song, 10:15 a.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library, also June 8, 15, 22 and 29

2 Tech 4 U, 1:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library, also 5:30 p.m. June 23

Executive Functioning Across the Life Span, 6 p.m., town hall auditorium, 860-665-8590

Evening Book Discussion Group, 7 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

4 Bus Trip to New York City, 7:30 a.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

Newington Historical Society Tag Sale, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Kellogg-Eddy House & Museum, 679 Willard Ave., 860-666-7118 or 860-667-0123

6 Lyman Orchards of Middlefield Outing, 7 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

7 Play With Us, 10:15 a.m., for children with special needs, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library, also June 14, 21, and 28

Let's Make Music Together, noon, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

Dear Daycare Parent, 7 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

8 Junior Cookbook Club, 6:30 p.m., for grades K-2, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

Friends of the Library Annual Meeting, 7 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

A Tribute to the Beatles and More, 7:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

9 MS Support Group, noon to 2 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-667-1314 or 860-236-2751

Before & After Your Computer, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

13 An Adult Coloring Group, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library, also 10 a.m. June 28

14 Stories & Art, noon, for ages 2-4 and a caregiver, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

National Alliance on Mental Illness, 7 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-205-9542 or 860-830-2129

15 Chess Club, 4 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

Cookbook Club, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

16 Adult Summer Reading Kickoff, 10:30 a.m. or 4:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

18 Touch a Truck, 10 a.m. to noon, parking lot between Lucy Robbins Welles Library and town hall

Summer Reading Kickoff, 10 a.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

20 Substance Abuse & Mental Health Forum, 6:30-8 p.m., town hall auditorium, 860-665-8590

Hartford Denim Company, 7 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

21 Intro to CPR & First Aid, 6:30 p.m., for grades 6-12, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

Powerful Voices: Connecticut Women Changing Democracy, noon, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

Family Yoga, 6:30 p.m., for ages 5-8 and a caregiver, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

22 Film "Bridge of Spies," 1 & 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

23 The Prehistoric Games, 10:15 a.m., for ages 3-8, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

Book Speed Dating, 6 p.m., for grades 5-8, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

24 Lip Sync Battle, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

27 Annual Buddy Bake-Off, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

28 Get Your Body Back, 7 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

GFWC Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club, 7 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-666-4371

29 Mezudio, 10:15 a.m., for ages 5 and older, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

Teen Cooking 101, 6:30 p.m., for grades 6-12, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

30 Tech Troubleshooting with Teens, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.

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Editorial

It's time to clean up the fiscal mess

The state legislature is in the throes of one of its most unpleasant sessions in recent memory. The state budget is untenable, the deficit is completely out of control and getting worse, and next year promises to be even more grim.

How did we get into this mess? The short answer is careless spending, big government, trying to fund every program that came along, and then some. Also to blame are years of raises for state employees and maintenance of a benefit package that few in the private or nonprofit sector enjoy.

It's easy to spend someone else's money. They do it in Washington, D.C., all the time, and Connecticut is no different. Just increase taxes or borrow more and don't worry about the ramifications until they arrive.

Well, those ramifications have arrived, and are falling on us like unrelenting rain. Trimming and tucking won't fix the problem. Major cuts are needed and major changes in how state government operates must be adopted so that, once we dig out of this sinkhole, we don't fall in again.

Gone are the days when employee unions can say they are doing their part by only asking for a 1 or 2 percent wage increase. A large number of the working residents of Connecticut have not seen a raise of even $1 in years, so there is little support for those who paychecks grow with every contract.

These same people with flat wages are also paying more every year for health insurance. Union people are paying more, too, but they tend to have better plans.

While the cuts need to be made with a hacksaw rather than a scalpel, certain programs should be spared as much as possible, specifically those that help people who can't help themselves. That means programs serving senior citizens, little children, the unemployed and those with disabilities.

The legislature and governor would also be wise to take a comprehensive look at the business climate. Connecticut is a notoriously business-unfriendly state and if that doesn't change we will most assuredly see more major corporations and even smaller operations move to greener pastures, as General Electric did a few months ago when it announced it is vacating Fairfield.

Business taxes here are too high and there are too many of them. Regulations are even more numerous and ponderous. There are some that need to stay, like those that protect the environment and workers, but others that have limited value can easily be discontinued.

With all of the attention being paid to the presidential campaign, little has been said yet about the legislative elections that are also on tap this November. That will change when candidates are formally nominated and voters are encouraged to pay close attention to what the candidates for the state Senate and House have to say.

What they do, in many ways, affects us more than what happens in Washington. We need to ask them what they are going to do to get us out of this fiscal mess. **NL**

Events spotlight

Newington Historical Society Tag Sale

June 4, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Kellogg-Eddy House & Museum, 679 Willard Ave.
860-666-7118 or 860-667-0123

This annual event will feature glassware, dishes and other treasures including jewelry, small kitchen and electronic appliances, all in good condition; no books or clothing. Donations will be accepted May 28 between the hours of 9 a.m. and noon.

Touch a Truck

June 18, 10 a.m. to noon
Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St.

The GFWC Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club presents this 11th annual event. This is a hands-on event where children can climb in or on a variety of vehicles. Each child will receive two complimentary raffle tickets for an opportunity to win prizes of their choice. The bake sale booth will have homemade baked goods. Proceeds from the bake sale will go toward scholarships and other community needs.

Substance abuse and mental health forum

June 20, 6:30-8 p.m.
Town hall auditorium
860-665-8590

This forum is designed to provide people dealing with substance abuse and mental health issues with clear information on what to do and how to get help. The discussion will cover such topics as the opiod overdose epidemic, high school suicide and much more. Panelists will include community leaders, a family member and a person in recovery. Among the panelists are Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon of the state Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services and Dr. Raul Pino, commissioner of the state Department of Public Health. **NL**

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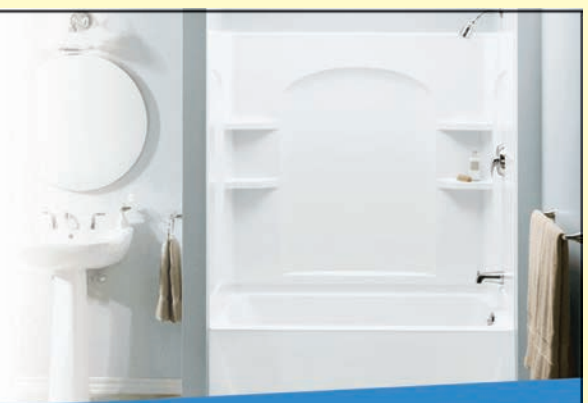

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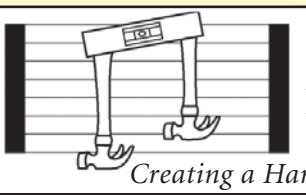

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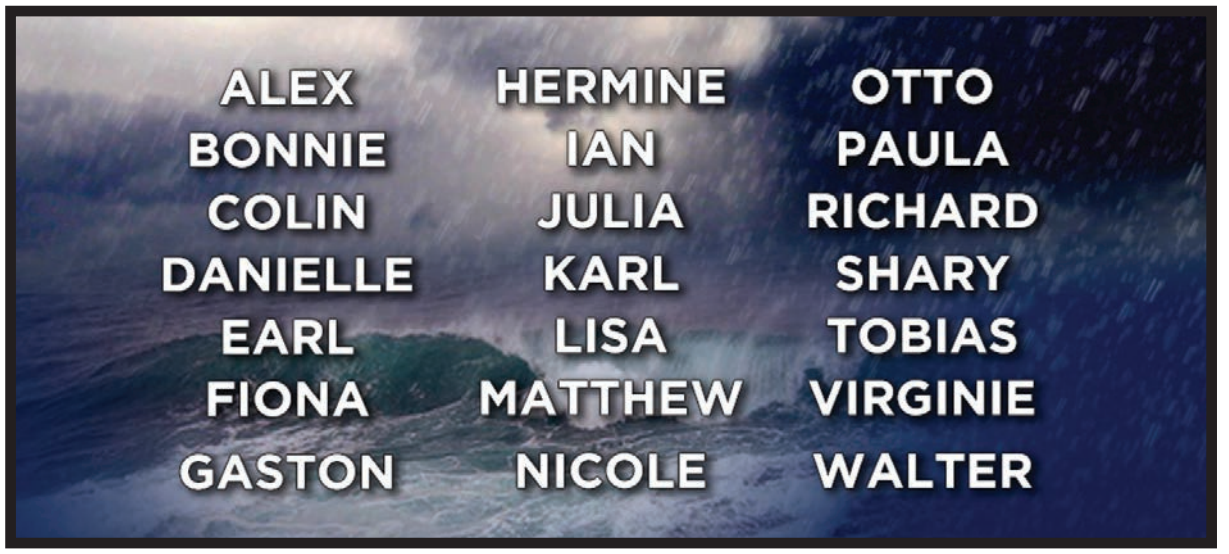


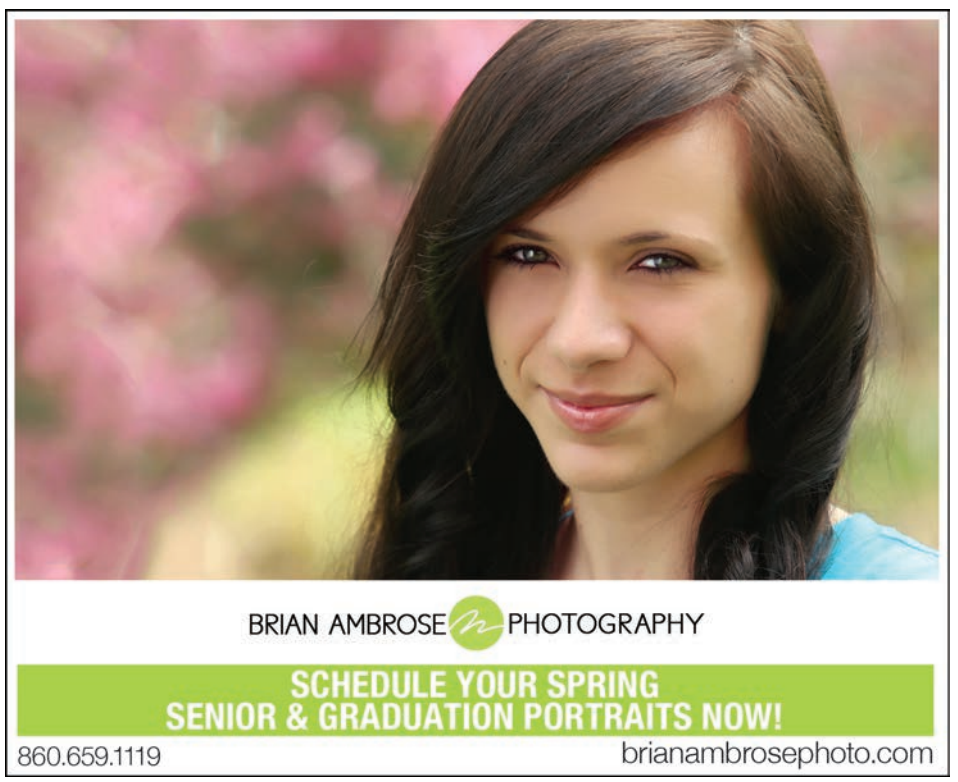
Going into the 2016 Hurricane Season...

The Atlantic Hurricane Season of 2015 featured 11 named storms, 4 reached hurricane status and of those only 2 became MAJOR hurricanes. Furthermore, there were just two (Ana and Bill) that made US landfalls (both as tropical storms).

The list of names last year is one of 6 used in rotation for the Atlantic Basin (including the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean) ... alternating gender, starting at the top of the alphabet. Two names will be retired by the WMO (World Meteorological Organization, a group of international scientists) for the list that will be used again in 2021. Erika will be replaced with "Elsa" and Joaquin will be replaced with "Julian." Names are retired when a storm was either so deadly or costly.

The Atlantic season runs from June 1st through November 30th ... we'll of course keep you updated on any and all development! In fact, Alex already formed (in January, the 1st to do so since 1955 in that month). The complete list is in the graphic above.

Before getting a name, a Tropical Depression forms (they get numbers). An "average season" includes 12 Tropical Storms (wind 39mph or greater), 6 Hurricanes (wind 74mph or greater) and 3 Major Hurricanes (111mph or greater). The initial outlook for 2016 is for the season to be perhaps more active than the past several years. **WHL**



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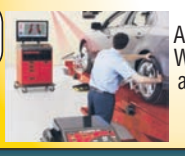

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